



Natural Resources Conservation in South Carolina

Briefing for Legislators



Walter W. Douglas, NRCS State Conservationist

December 2004

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Carolina continues to conserve our state's natural resources and protect the environment. For more information, contact the local USDA Service Center in your county.

NRCS Introduces the Conservation Security Program (CSP)

In the spring of 2004, NRCS announced the arrival of the **Conservation Security Program (CSP)**. CSP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. South Carolina was one of 22 states to participate in CSP, with 76 contracts awarded to producers in the Saluda River watershed. Total acreage enrolled in the program in South Carolina was over 20,000. Land uses included cropland, irrigated cropland, and pasture. A signing ceremony was held at John Long's farm in Newberry, SC, to celebrate the signing of the first CSP contract in the state. NRCS State Conservationist Walter W. Douglas said that producers participating in CSP would receive between \$500-\$32,000 over a ten year period for a broad range of conservation work that protects and enhances natural resource conservation.



John Long of Newberry, SC, was the first farmer in South Carolina to sign a CSP contract with NRCS.



Linda Sexton (right) of Kinards, SC, worked with NRCS District Conservationist Lisa Good (left) to enroll her alfalfa operation in CSP.

Sexton's CSP contract was based on the conservation practice of forage harvest management, or specifically, cutting grass for hay. However, Sexton went above and beyond her stewardship activities by practicing intensive nutrient and pest management, collecting yield data, controlling noxious/invasive weeds, and testing her soil on a regular basis.

With a 10-year CSP contract, Sexton is realizing that her conservation efforts were definitely worthwhile. "This is a wonderful program to encourage producers to do all that they can to protect our natural resources, and now they will get rewarded for what many farm families have been doing for generations."

Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced the 2005 CSP watershed selections. Three South Carolina watersheds were among more than 200 across the nation invited to participate in CSP. Eligible SC watersheds for 2005 are the Black, Lynches, and South Fork Edisto River. Total acreage included is over 2.7 million. Sign up will begin in early 2005.



The 2005 CSP watersheds in South Carolina include parts of 16 counties with a total acreage of over 2.7 million.

NRCS Partners with SC Army National Guard to Implement Conservation on Training Areas

NRCS and the SC Army National Guard (SCARNG) formed a conservation partnership that utilizes conservation practices to remediate erosion and other natural resource concerns, ultimately resulting in improved training areas on the facility. With NRCS technical assistance, SCARNG installed erosion control practices, storm water management practices, (such as a sediment basin) and training area improvement practices (such as tank turn pads on well-used roads). These practices meet NRCS specifications and were tailored specifically for these projects.

The partnership began in the fall of 1998 with the installation of conservation practices exceeding \$750,000. The overall size of the SCARNG McCrady Training Center is around 15,000 acres and 5,000 of those acres have been planned for conservation practices. Just as military training is a continuous, on-going process, the protection and conservation of natural resources must also be on-going to ensure training areas can support training activities.



Erosion site before conservation practices were installed.

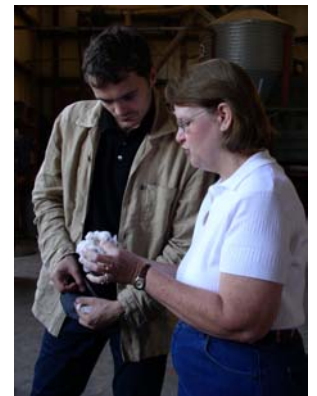


Erosion site after conservation practices were installed.

International Visitors Tour Farms in York County

NRCS District Conservationist Maryann Trent hosted a brief tour of local farms for a group of five European visitors in York County who were participating in a program entitled "European Foreign Policy Challenges" through the International Visitors Program, a program of the U.S. State Department and International House. Members of the small party included *Political Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Conservative Party of Norway, Cabinet Chief to the President of Montenegro, Desk Officer of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovak Republic, Journalist of the Corriere del Ticino in Bern and Head of European Policy and Coordination Branch, Regeneration and External Affairs Division, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.*

Trent led the group on a tour of a cotton farm, owned by Mr. Dean Boyd, and a cattle farm, owned by Mr. C.W. Senn. Both farmers met with the visitors and discussed topics relevant to their operations, such as commodity crops, the fluctuation of national and global markets, mad cow disease and government sanctions and laws concerning livestock.



Maryann Trent, York County District Conservationist (right), discusses cotton crops with a European visitor.

South Carolina Earth Team Yields Success in 2004!

The South Carolina Earth Team had a very successful year, with 571 volunteers contributing 15,185 hours in 2004. The Earth Team is a national NRCS volunteer program where individuals or groups 14 years of age or older assist NRCS employees in conserving, improving and sustaining natural resources and the environment. Volunteer activities vary, depending on interest and skill, such as performing clerical duties, working with farmers and landowners, or visiting schools and/or community events. For more information about the Earth Team, or how you can get involved, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>

